



Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

 Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 1369-183X (Print) 1469-9451 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjms20>

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To cite this article: Jürgen Schmidt (2019): The German labour movement, 1830s–1840s: early efforts at political transnationalism, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2018.1554283](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1554283)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1554283>



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Published online: 15 Jan 2019.



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The German labour movement, 1830s–1840s: early efforts at political transnationalism

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ABSTRACT

It is a key idea that the German Labour Movement originated in the early nineteenth century abroad. In the more liberal atmosphere of Paris, Brussels, Geneva and London political refugees and travelling journeymen came together and founded associations. This turn of events should, however, not be seen solely within the analytical framework of class formation but also as part of the civil societal development of a transnational movement that fought for the acceptance of the workers as ‘real citizens’. This paper seeks to place the topic of the (political) formation of the German working class in dialogue with the structure of political remittances and thereby to enquire into the influence of foreign ideas and associational models on the early German working class: which actors, media and ideas helped spread these new forms of associations; how were these shaped by the interplay between national impacts and transnational developments?

KEYWORDS

German labour movement; political remittances; transnationalism; working class formation; political refugees

1. Introduction: journeymen on the move

It is widely accepted that the organisation of the German labour movement originated abroad in the 1830s. In the more liberal atmosphere of Paris, Brussels, Geneva and London, German political refugees and travelling journeymen came together and founded associations (Schmidt 2018, part I; Dunk 1966, 333). Host societies and their governments opened, for the activists of the early German labour movement, ‘structures of opportunity’ (‘Gelegenheitsstrukturen’) that did not exist in their country of origin (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005, 826f.). This development not only can be described within the analytical framework of class formation but also as part of political remittances exchanges, of the civil societal emergence of a movement which fought for the acceptance of the workers as ‘real citizens’ and of the culture of associations and transnationality. The history of the early German Labour movement, before the 1848 revolution, is thus very suitable a case study to analyse political remittances – as defined in the introduction of this special issue as an ‘act of transferring political principles, vocabulary and practices between two or more places [...]’ (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2018). This paper therefore

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questions the influence of foreign organisational models on early German working class associations,¹ the impact caused on the host countries by the interfering effects of workers' solidarity, the national tensions created between domestic and foreign workers and finally the problem of identity. From this perspective, this article appertains to research on political remittances understood as flow of ideas, values, knowledge and organisational patterns across borders. How were political associational models and political ideas able to be spread? How were they shaped by the interplay between national impacts and transnational developments? In general terms, the article also looks at the reciprocal relations between senders and receivers as well as the role of the transmitter.

Understanding how political remittances were adopted, transformed and distributed is at the heart of this article. This means that the reader will not find here a detailed history of migration in the relevant cities and towns, but instead an impression of the places and spaces where political remittances matured and under the conditions of which German migrants lived. Place and space are diffuse categories which can cover very different realities (Rau 2013, 55–70). Despite this, they are of heuristic value since they help explain why the roots of the German labour movements lay in Germany's neighbouring countries. There are many ways of defining place and space, this article concentrates only on two of them. First, place is meant here as a real, concretely located area which serves the reconstruction of the living conditions of German migrants in foreign cities (see also Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2018). Second, space describes a more abstract zone where social relations, synthesised in ideas, discussions and the formation of a public sphere through printed media, could, in turn, easily surmount borders and geographical places. In this respect, this narrower definition of space does not seek to limit itself to the concept of a 'bourgeois public sphere' which focuses essentially on the discourses of the elites and the middle classes. On the contrary, it encompasses the non-middle class public sphere (inns, hostels, streets, popular culture in general) as a fundamental 'production area' of ideas, identities and communication among workers. It also includes workers' and journeymen's printed media, which shared many similarities with the middle-class public sphere. Hence, this paper does not create an unproductive dichotomy between a bourgeois public sphere on one side, and a proletarian public sphere on the other. By contrast, the incorporation of printed media within the definition of a public sphere implicates that it developed on different levels: from the micro levels of rumours in inns to the national discourse on the societal development of a country. In addition, middle-class ideals and paradigms were able to develop within this expending working-class public sphere via processes of, on the one hand, adaption and alignment and, on the other hand, disruption and opposition (Habermas 1990; Brophy 2007). In particular, it was this double-sided public sphere that provided space for political ideas, discourses and disputes. It also facilitated the exportation and transfer of political remittances at the local and transnational levels. In the public sphere of media and written texts, workers and journeymen gathered knowledge and information about political concepts, ideas and institutions, whereas in the other public sphere of associations and public meetings, they learnt to communicate, argue and persuade in face-to-face situations. Equipped with such an 'intellectual knapsack',² a process of diffusion could start when journeymen returned to their home country.

Mobility and flexibility in the labour market are in no way unique to our time. Until the mid-nineteenth century and with the 'obligation to travel' (*Wanderzwang*), an institutional regulation forced most young journeymen to leave their home after their

apprenticeship; it ultimately shaped the course of their lives. This foreign experience, it was hoped, would broaden the knowledge of journeymen and help them on their way to occupational autonomy (Wadauer 2003, 53f.). They were also on the lookout for education, culture and touristic highlights, though they followed well-established routes throughout (mainly) Western Europe, which shows that despite a certain thirst for adventure, they conformed to traditional set patterns (Schieder 1963).

Similarly, the expatriate communities established German quarters abroad, imparting a sense of home and identity.³ But these German neighbourhoods were rarely closed and insular and, inevitably, living in a foreign city also enabled the connection between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the known and the unknown. Learning from the other was possible. For example, a German diplomat wrote in July 1838 about the 'League of the Outlaws' (*Bund der Geächteten*):

'This league was obviously set in connection with foreign countries. Not only the idea of acting as a class of journeymen (*Handwerkerklasse*) but also the pattern of organisation was adopted from the French 'Society for Human Rights' (*Gesellschaft der Menschenrechte*)' (quoted in Verein für Frankfurter Arbeitergeschichte 1994, 48).

Beside these positive effects which created a feeling of coherence, also existed powers of cohesion which resulted from negative experiences. Journeymen's mobility was also a way for them to flee unemployment. In German and other European cities, craftsmen were confronted with a highly competitive labour market, a situation common to many a profession, especially mass handicrafts like shoemaking, carpentry and tailoring. 'But not one in a hundred of us can ever hope to obtain a master position', wrote a journeyman from Paris in 1835 (Strähl 1988, 19). This collision of positive and negative experiences opened up spaces for new ideas and created a willingness to incorporate thoughts and concepts which came from outside and could then, via the mobility of journeymen, be brought back to the states of the German Confederation.

That the spaces and places of the German labour movement were located abroad also had political reasons. The readiness of western European countries to welcome political refugees, following the 'quasi-revolutionary' years experienced by some German states between 1831 and 1833, established the basis for German organisational attempts abroad (Inauen 2008, 119ff.; Reiter 1992, 81–142; see for political émigrés from Russia in late nineteenth century, Hartnett 2019). But although (nation) states set a basic pre-condition for the transfer of political remittances (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2018), the actual organisational practice and exchange of political remittances were concretised without state interference.

Political persecution and the occupational tradition of travelling for journeymen brought in closer contact abroad two social groups who, in their everyday and professional life at home in the German states, would have hardly encountered each other: middle class political intellectuals with their national, liberal, democratic and radical-democratic ideas; and young adventurous journeymen whose expectations for the future oscillated between precariousness and a lack of prospects, and the hope to integrate the traditional world of crafts and secure positions as master craftsmen (Dunk 1966, 345). However, the impact of these organisations and of their political remittances on political change has to be examined carefully. In March 1848, for example, revolution spread throughout different German states, right after the clarion call of the French February Revolution. While in

this instance we have a clear and prompt relation of actions, supported by the circulation of news (Schmidt 2018, part II), such correlations were much more subliminal and their subversive character more difficult to detect in the case of political remittances during the preceding two decades.

To analyse the different aspects of political remittances and transnationality, I will, first of all, examine some of the possibilities created by a political public sphere, as illustrated in its development in the small Swiss town of Biel in the 1830s. Secondly, I will appraise the means of (transnational) communication, then I will lay the pros and cons of the transnational characteristics of the German labour movement, to finally conclude on some considerations about the concept of political remittances within this case study.

2. Biel as one example

First, we will not illustrate the development of the German labour movement's associations abroad with the well-known cases of the metropolises of London and Paris but instead, with the small Swiss town of Biel. Of course, the importance, size and attraction of Biel, in the canton Bern, had nothing in common with those of the Western European capitals. Unlike Paris, Biel was not the place of migration of thousands of Germans affected by pauperism in the 1830s. Between 1818 and 1850, the number of inhabitants of Biel rose slowly from about 3,500–5,600. The share of foreigners was six per cent in 1850. Due to structural changes in the textile industry in the 1830s, Biel had to face an economic decline which the city council was only able to put a stop to by allowing French watchmakers to settle in the town and by remitting their citizens' fees (*Bürgergeld*). Between 1844 and 1859, more than 1,700 watchmakers came to Biel and made the town a centre of clock production. Due to this economic structure, Biel was not an attractive town, as far as employment and occupational possibilities were concerned, for travelling German journeymen (except watchmakers, of course). But Biel was a 'classical' transit stop on the travel route which connected German speaking to French speaking Switzerland.

The importance of Biel in the development of the German labour movement was due to the initiative and influence of one German migrant: Ernst Schüler. Schüler, at the age of 26, emigrated for political reasons to Biel where he worked, thanks to his personal networks, as a teacher in a grammar school. In 1836 he was granted citizenship of the municipality (*Bürgerrecht*). Schüler not only found in Biel an ideal place of refuge, he was also integrated in the society (Bourquin, Bourquin, and Hadorn 1999; Schieder 1963, 29, 42–44, 149; Höppner and Seidel-Höppner 2005, 120).

Thanks to Schüler's political engagement, Biel became a crossroad for travelling journeymen who found there structures that facilitated community and social cohesion. Thus, Schüler created for them a 'reading society' (*Leseverein*) in 1833. Schüler understood how he could use the political and educational interests, as well as the regional mobility, of the journeymen to communicate and transfer the ideas of the republican-inspired society 'Young Germany' (*Junges Deutschland*) from Switzerland to the German states. 'The patriotic German craftsman is walking propaganda: the knapsack on his back, a lump of money in his pocket, a gnarled stick in his hand, travelling from Berlin to Konstanz, from Vienna to Hamburg' (Schüler 1837, 17f.).

Schüler also founded a printing shop in 1835, turning Biel into the printed media centre of 'Young Germany' and of other thought-provoking publications, such as the German

translation of the book by French political writer Félicité de Lamennais: *Le Livre du peuple*. In addition, the 1836 'Association of Craftsmen' (*Handwerkerverein*) of Biel began to centralise and coordinate different clubs and associations which sympathised with the republican ideas of 'Young Germany' and encouraged travelling journeymen to initiate new clubs in other towns. Biel thence became the centre of the 'Young Germany' movement (Schieder 1963, 39–44, 149). Schüler described the basic concept of this network:

'In Paris and other towns, as well as in Switzerland some people had the idea to communicate liberal principles to these journeymen who are sons of German parents so that once they return to Germany, they strengthen that party which is hostile to the princes' (quoted in Ruckhäberle 1983, 3).

Migration to metropolises like Paris as well as travels through transit towns like Biel contributed to the interconnectedness of the different opposite movements of the pre-revolutionary years. The effect of the secret society 'Young Germany' was three-fold. First, it helped initiate the organisation of journeymen's and workers' associations within Switzerland. Second, it allowed the creation of splinter groups of 'Young Germany' in the southwestern part of Germany. Third, it kept the ideas of liberalism, republicanism and revolutionary change alive. Due to a lack of sources, the ways in which Swiss republicanism, as an institutional framework, was perceived and transmitted to followers in Germany remains to be determined.

3. Communication between associations and association members

Liberal, national, and later, socialist and revolutionary ideas were communicated through books, journals, brochures and leaflets. 'Today the printed word exerts immeasurable influence over the attitude of the people', assessed a Swiss report from 1843 on the importance of printed press on the development of communism in Switzerland (Bluntschli (1843) 1973). The variety of journals and leaflets, as well as the number of individual copies, published, written, edited and printed outside the German states, was remarkable. In the pre-revolutionary period, between 1830 and 1848, at least 74 emigrants' journals were published (Grandjonc 1979, 229–297). Jakob Venedey edited in Paris the journal '*Der Geächtete*' ('The Outlaw'), a journal which the poet Heinrich Heine also contributed to, and which had a circulation of 500 copies. By comparison, the refugees in Switzerland printed their journal '*Nordlicht*' ('Northern lights') more successfully with a circulation of 1,000–2,000. The journal '*Die junge Generation*' ('The Young Generation') edited by Wilhelm Weitling, leading figure and 'spin doctor' of the early German labour movement and one of the founding fathers of utopian communism in Germany, had a similar circulation in 1841/42; and Weitling's programmatic book '*Die Menschheit wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte*' ('How mankind is and how it should be') was printed in Paris in 1838 'on a secret press with two thousand copies'. Some leaflets, such as the one published under the camouflage title 'Letters from the Free States of North America' ('*Brief aus den Freistaaten von Nordamerika*'), even reached 4,000 copies (Schieder 1963; Höppner and Seidel-Höppner 2005, 109, 113).

But the high-circulation of printed material wasn't the only contributing factor to the popularisation and spreading of liberal, democratic and socialist texts; rhymes and songs also played an important role. Working class choral songs had notable advantages. They

had direct connections to the popular and everyday culture of singing: within the associations and secret societies, choral singing had a 'suggestive impact' and represented, in these 'fraternal societies, a significant means to build companionship'. In addition, in the simplified and condensed language of songs, it was possible to translate vividly and memorably the political messages of the associations, especially when new political texts and contents were combined with the rhythms of well-known traditional folk songs (Körner 1997, 85–88). Therefore, song lyrics could not only be found in the aforementioned journals, there were also printed collections of poems and songs which helped maintain strong ties with the homeland and, it was hoped, could capture the interest of new potential members.

All in all, the ability to go beyond the spatial limits of places by connecting them and to occupy 'mental spaces' with new contents was decisive. The travelling journeymen could perform both tasks. On the one hand, journeymen brought a lot of printed media back to the German states which caused a backlash from the German authorities who put in place bans on travelling to West European states and controlled journeymen frequently. These state reactions indicate that the process of networking was successful. On the other hand, journeymen not only distributed the journals, they became mediators themselves. As police reports on arrested journeymen show, a lot of them only knew snippets of more general concepts and ideas. But still, more importantly, by coming in contact with these associations and secret societies, by reading their journals and by listening and taking part in their discussions, for the first time in their life, craftsmen experienced basic political education. Terms like constitution, taxes or elections became manifest, conceivable to them, and could be integrated in new contexts. In primary schools and during their apprenticeship, they would have never heard these terms or have learnt how to make use of them. When these politically skilled journeymen, armed with their newly acquired knowledge, arrived in inns and hostels and spoke to other guests about these things, they drew attention. This did not necessarily conclude in the direct political agitation of the inn's guests. But everyday life discussions about politics and society, arguments about journal articles in which the journeymen could bring their point of views and thus influence others' opinions, contributed at least indirectly to the politicisation of conversations (Brophy 2007, 155–170).

As we will now see, integrating aspects of political popular culture into our perspective, allows us to position the process of association formation abroad within the context of the individual experience of living abroad, the contact between emigrant German intellectuals and journeymen, the concrete social conditions in places of migration and, finally, of the adoption, reception and adaptation of concepts and ideas discussed throughout Europe (see for this approach from below also Piper and Rother (2018)).

4. Transnational and national encounters as part of political remittances exchange in the German *Vormärz*⁴

Transnationalism, as it is discussed today in history, involves first of all the idea of transfer across national and cultural borders. It looks at processes of adoption and integration, not only of diffusion. Furthermore, transnationalism seeks to identify actors who cross national borders, create networks across these borders and thus interrelate and intertwine starting points and target points (Pernau 2011). In this context, the history of the German labour

movement and of its associations before 1848 is indeed not only a ‘German’ but a transnational history. Beside Switzerland, London and Paris became particularly important centres of exchange, contact and transnational learning. In this study, three aspects of transnationalism stand out.

Firstly, in the pre-revolutionary years we saw that the formation of working class organisations abroad was a result of the contact between intellectuals and journeymen (see also Dunk 1966, 345). But the foreign context these groups experienced had permeating effects as well. When, under the leadership of Louis-Auguste Blanqui and Armand Barbès, both holding communist views, around five hundred French working class people attacked the Paris Town Hall, German craftsmen could be found among their ranks. Wilhelm Weitling wrote in the preface of his book *‘Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit’* (‘Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom’): ‘The coup executed by the honourable Barbès on 2 May 1839 in Paris was more effectual for the principle of communism than any previous oral and written propaganda’. Although this attack ended in total fiasco, because the inhabitants of Paris did not support this communist uprising, a Swiss diplomat, in an anti-communist report from 1839, saw this rebellious disturbance as a first step for the European communist movement: ‘From then on, communist principles spread among *German* workers’ (Weitling (1839) 1845; Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1970, vol. I, 115; Bluntschli (1843) 1973, 4, italics in original).

In London, journeymen and political refugees were able to learn from the Chartist movement and witness the impact of large and varied public audience. The English Chartists held public conventions to discuss and decide on programmatic positions; these could serve as models for German organisations, too. Therefore in 1846 the idea of congresses spread among German left-wing associations abroad. However, different conceptions of what a congress should be emerged. While, on the one hand, the members of the London ‘League of the Just’ (*‘Bund der Gerechten’*) favoured an essentially grass-roots democratic variant in which, in a discursive way, different opinions should be exchanged and a bearable compromise for all be reached; on the other hand, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had a more ‘publicity-oriented’ congress in mind. Ahead of any possible congress, they thought that all theoretical differences should first be put aside in order to use this gathering as powerful starting points for active agitation among the working classes. Marx and Engels won the argument and, within a few months, were mandated to formulate a programme for the new association. The way ahead for the ‘Communist Manifesto’ was paved.

Transnational and international cooperation was also strengthened in London. In September 1845, the loosely organised ‘Fraternal Democrats’ was founded, gathering left-wing chartists, members of the ‘League of the Just’, German craftsmen and political emigrants from different European countries.⁵ Notably, Friedrich Engels attended one of its preliminary meetings. The association’s aim was ‘to collect more information about the movements in the different countries which pursue our common concern [...] by organising regular conjoined meetings’. Engels and Marx’s ‘Communitistic Correspondence Committee’ (*‘Kommunistisches Korrespondenzkomitee’*), founded in Brussels 1846, had direct contacts with the ‘Fraternal Democrats’ (*The Northern Star*, 23. August 1845, quoted in Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1970, vol. I, 243).

The connections between the leading figures of the German associations abroad and the organisations of the host countries were numerous. For example, Karl Schapper and

Heinrich Bauer, both leaders of the ‘League of the Just’ and later of the ‘Communist League’, participated on several occasions, in 1843 and 1844, in the discussions of the ‘Société Démocratique Française’ in Paris. In London, in the autumn of 1844, the ‘Democratic Friends of all Nations’ society was founded, counting amongst its members, again, as with the organisation of the ‘Fraternal Democrats’, English chartists, as well as Polish, Italian and German craftsmen. Thus, when in September 1844 Wilhelm Weitling arrived in London, he was welcomed by ‘a very large assembly of British and Foreign socialists’ (Grandjonc, König, and Roy-Jacquemart 1979, 7; see also Lattek 2006, 25ff.; Panayi 2000, 42f.). In Germany, in turn, the ‘*Leipziger Zeitung*’ reported that in Breslau (Wrocław) ‘a communist society was founded which [had] the same principles as English and French communists’. And finally, the English ‘Mechanics’ Institutes’ was the model for the German workers’ educational associations (‘*Arbeiterbildungsvereine*’), which developed in the German states in the 1840s under middle-class liberal leadership (Die junge Generation, December 1842, 279; Eisenberg 1988, 201).

Secondly, a further level of transnational entanglement can be found in the reception and adoption of early socialist ideas. Wilhelm Weitling’s book ‘*Die Menschheit wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte*’ was written in a biblical-religious style, according to Félicité de Lamennais’s works. The ‘League of the Just’ discussed the ideas of social economy developed by François Babeuf and this is how they became part of Weitling’s book. In practice, during the meetings of the ‘League’, a French speaking German member would translate a text step by step, after which each paragraph was debated.

In general, the emergence of a broader audience facilitated the circulation of ideas. In 1842 in Weitling’s journal ‘*Hülferuf*’ (‘Cry for Help’), an article about ‘*Die Fortschritte des sozialen Systems in England*’ (‘The progress of the social system in England’) spoke of Robert Owen, the ‘father of the English communists, meaning the one who first preached the principles of community of property to the people’. Friedrich Engels, in turn, wrote in 1843 in Owen’s journal ‘New Moral World’ about the development of socialism on the continent. Meanwhile in Germany, an informed public could broaden its horizons with Lorenz von Stein’s book ‘*Der Sozialismus und Kommunismus des heutigen Frankreich*’, published in 1842. (Der Hülferuf, May 1842, 137; Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1970, vol. I, 183f., 1019). And finally, Weitling’s books were translated in four languages, the Belgian newspaper ‘Le Peuple’ describing him, in 1849, as the most prominent and famous German socialist (Seidel-Höppner 2008).

Needless to say that the circulation and existence of a workers’ public sphere could not by themselves explain the willingness to receive socialist-communist ideas. Fundamental changes in the economy and within society – the rise of the so-called ‘social question’ with all its frictions, tensions and problems – created a fertile ground, in very different national contexts, that could allow ideas of justice, equality and common-based economy to grow. ‘The increasing wretchedness of the working classes on the one hand and the daily rising wealth of a few people on the other hand made social reform necessary’; and this disproportion was the reason for the success of Robert Owen’s ‘communitistic associations’, wrote an author in 1842 in one of Weitling’s journals (Die junge Generation, January 1842, 66f.).

Thirdly, the consciousness of a common condition of the workers could also take on transnational aspects. Hence in Paris, in July 1840, French and German tailors went on strike side by side and wrote letters to their workmates in Berlin, Brunswick and Darmstadt to ask for their financial support (Aufruf der Schneidergesellen in Paris, 10 July

1840, quoted in Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1970, vol I, 123f.) This can also be seen in August Becker's declaration that 'we take national pride generally for a folly. [...] The French-Swiss workers are so much closer to us than any German bankers, although their bank houses may be located on German soil' (Becker 1844, 42, 46). With regard to the inequality experienced by many, some authors even became more radicalised and were no longer satisfied with liberal-democratic state structures. 'It is true that a lot of Swiss cantons have a fine, free, equal-rights constitution', a letter to the editor of Weitling's journal *'Die junge Generation'* stated in 1842, but 'the cold reality is, we have the same master-and-servant relation here as in Germany, France, England, yes, as in the whole world'. In Germany this time, Moses Hess described, in his *'Gesellschaftsspiegel'* ('Society's Mirror') in 1845, the months-long strike of Paris carpenters as an exemplary social movement. Concrete financial help, transnational perception of social movements and a plea for international solidarity went obviously hand in hand in the culture of working-class associations.

However, we also have to consider the limits of the transnational as an entanglement. Four aspects are of central relevance here.

First, despite the fact that different nationalities met in German associations and societies, it remains that they were indeed *German* associations. This was obvious in the early 1830s when liberal exile associations were founded in support of German nationalism and were labelled 'German fatherland association' (*'Deutscher Vaterlandsverein'*) or 'German People's Association' (*'Deutscher Volksverein'*). But it was also true of artisans' associations and later of socialist-communist organisations. Hence the draft of the statutes of the 'League of the Just' stated: 'The fraternity of the Just consists of Germans or German speakers' (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1970, vol I, 153); similar rules can be found in the statutes of the 'German Workingmen Association Concordia' in Copenhagen in the 1850s (see Snell 1999, 189f.). The library of the 'Educational and mutual aid society for Workers in London' (*'Bildungs- und gegenseitige Unterstützungs-Gesellschaft für Arbeiter in London'*) held English and French books, but the overwhelming majority of its collection was by German authors (Bücherverzeichniß der Bildungs- und gegenseitige Unterstützungs-Gesellschaft für Arbeiter in London, 1845, in: Grandjonc, König, and Roy-Jacquemart 1979, 37–39). It was a library for German artisans living for a while in London, but who would ultimately return to their home country.⁶ The journals published by the organisation were written in German too, their targeted audience being not only the exile community but also readers in the German states. This is how they developed a German public sphere abroad. Even August Becker, quoted above, who considered national pride as a 'ridiculous old hat', admitted that 'the natural sphere of impact for us Germans is mainly Germany' (Becker 1844, 42, 44; see, in general, Schrover and Vermeulen 2005, 825f.).

Second, migration was accompanied by the production of 'national spaces' abroad as well as by the experience of exclusion. The German baker Wilhelm Tacke, in the metropolis of Paris in 1838, found his way to a "German coffee house" where he 'lived for 14 days'. 'My boarding house was run by [...] Friedrich Neuhoﬀ, a German man; I ate quite well and cheaply there,' he wrote. In the same year the tailor Friedrich Michaelsen complained in his diary that he did not make any progress in learning French 'because one has too many opportunities to speak German' (quoted in Wadauer 2003, 64f., 50). A manifold German 'community' existed in London, too (Lattek 2006, 19, 21; Panayi 1995).

German artisans and workers who stayed only for a few weeks or months in London, and on top of this who found work in a German company or artisan workshop, did not bring back much ‘transnationality’ in their knapsacks, except some touristic impressions. Already, in 1840, in a speech before domestic masters, Friedrich Eduard Stilling characterised the unusual situation of the German artisans in the French Swiss Vevey: ‘German workers are the most isolated ones, like lost sheep in the middle of an alien country’ (Silling (1840) 1983, 498).

This feeling of isolation also indicated exclusion. German workers and journeymen could be the recipients of exclusion by their non-German workmates (see for a general overview Schrover and Vermeulen 2005, 830). In Paris in the 1830s and 1840s, dissensions sometimes occurred between French and foreign workers. French workers ‘blamed foreign colleagues for their conformist attitude and felt hurt in their pride because domestic employers favoured foreign workers’. In August 1839, Belgian, German and Alsatian cabinet makers were attacked by French cabinet makers and other French workers. In a geographically mobile society where national borders and national labour markets were crossed, labour conflicts could become ‘nationalised’ (Derainne 2003, 127f., 142; see also Schieder 1963, 107). Such actions, that argued against international solidarity among workers and constructed dividing lines along nationalities, contributed to exclusion and obstructed transnational entanglements.

Third, the transnational included the national (see for the years after 1848 Sundermann 1997; see also Schraepler 1972, 30). The formation of a German public sphere abroad, as described above, occurred in parallel with the creation of a German nation. Thus members of the ‘German Fatherland Association’ declared at a meeting in 1832: ‘it is so good to come together *as Germans* and not as Bavarians, natives of Baden or Hesse and so on’. Moreover, the ‘League of the Outlaws’ stated as its aim ‘the liberation and rebirth of Germany and the realisation of the principles declared in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen’. Similarly, the statutes of the ‘League of the Just’ referred to ‘the liberation of Germany from the yoke of abusive oppression’.⁷ Universal aims such as those of human and civil rights transported the protagonists of foreign-based German associations into their nation-state-oriented objective: the social and political transformation of the German Confederation in a German national state. This process is a crucial aspect of political remittances since, as Green and Waldinger put it, ‘the new political environment often gives rise to social movements built in the place where the migrants *live* but designed to effect changes in the place that they have *left*.’ (Green and Waldinger 2016).

Finally, against the transnational overestimation of the pre-revolutionary years, the hypothesis can be formulated that a receptive and integrative attitude was particularly prevalent on the German side. France became the ‘ideology provider for the Central-European labour movement’; Robert Owen and the Chartists offered practical models of organisations to German workers and artisans; the structures of Italian secret societies, as passed on by Philippe Buonarroti and Giuseppe Mazzini, were a great source of inspiration (Langewiesche 2004, 152; Schieder 1963, 23). German response to the organisational attempts in France and Britain remained very limited. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels did not (yet) play an important role and the ‘League of Communists’ in London still remained a small German-based exile organisation. Even at an intellectual level, cooperation did not work very well. When the democrat Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx attempted to establish the

journal '*Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*' ('German-French Almanac') in 1844, they could not attract 'one single French co-author'; the 'Alliance intellectuelle' with France had failed before it even started (Hosfeld 2009, 39f.). It was primarily Wilhelm Weitling, and his work, who was perceived in other European countries as the autonomous voice of the developing German labour movement.

Thus, in the end, the common experiences shared by workers, journeymen and intellectuals can be described as interplays between transnational contacts and learning processes on the one hand, and between a growing sense of national identity abroad and the hostile reactions of domestic workers against their foreign counterpart on the other hand. As a result, an ambivalent situation emerged where migration and exile, as means of transnationality, featured and fostered a national German identity while, in another paradoxical turn, challenging the very political system of the German states by way of political remittances (for the relation between transnationalism and nationalism see Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2018).

5. Concluding remarks

Political persecution and traditional travelling patterns brought two social groups in contact with each other abroad, when they would have hardly met within the German Confederation: intellectuals and artisans. It was this mingling that created a culture of associations framed by discourses, fights for the better argument and struggle for reputation. It was a male world dominated by a masculine culture. To describe these processes more analytically, two aspects can be addressed. First of all, the concept of a working class slowly arose, not in the sense of a 'wage-earning working class' but in the sense of working classes bringing together different artisan professions. Indeed, the members of these associations and societies did not define themselves solely according to their vocation as baker or tailor, but saw themselves as workers. Secondly, a new struggle emerged, concerned with the recognition of German workers as citizens with equal rights and their ability to participate in society and the State. The creation of autonomous associational structures, the emphasis on civil society attributes like autonomy, mutual help and self-organisation are exemplary of this civil societal tendency of the early German labour movement. The awareness that cooperative common property was 'the first and foremost condition towards a free democratic republic' and the formulation, in the 'Communist Manifesto', that 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' highlight these trends, too (Karl Schapper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft*, 1838, quoted in Schieder 1963, 321; Marx and Engels (1848) 1972, 482). These experiences constitute an important basis for the establishment of a network of associations acting not only as a class conscious labour movement but also as active civil society protagonists. They fought for the acceptance of workers as 'real citizens' and for their right to vote within a democratically and nationally reformed state. Within this civil society interpretation framework, we can already observe the long-term evolution of secret societies into free associations and the definite refusal of clandestine organisation models of the mid-1840s onward. In addition, the secret societies as well as the public-oriented free associations were both inspired by foreign examples such as Buonarroti's conspirative circles and English Chartism.

With respect to political remittances, the early German labour movement abroad illustrates how important it was to first stabilise social and political capital in the guest

countries, before political remittances could be sent back home (see in general Piper 2009, 216). These learning and adaption processes within the German labour movement were very much centred around the necessity to build an identity as a German community. Impetus often came directly from Germany – think for instance of various German associations like the *Deutsche Preß- und Vaterlandsverein* (German Press and Fatherland Association), which had an affiliated society in Paris in the early 1830s, and of Wilhelm Weitling's writings of the late 1830s and early 1840s. On the other hand, the German communities in London, Paris and in Switzerland were influenced by the societal and political structures and organisational models that surrounded them. Hence in a second stage (in an analytical rather than chronological respect), the 'products' of these class and identity constructs abroad could be sent home as political remittances. Ideas on how to solve the problems of the 'working classes', how to democratise German states, how to form a German nation state and participate as workers within these processes, were received in a transnational manner. Printed public media together with the informal public sphere of working class culture, with its travelling journeymen as 'ambassadors' of new political ideas, played an important role in exporting these ideas to Germany. But this form of political remittances exchange was very much a result of more privileged workers, whereas unskilled German workers and the huge German sub-proletariat (especially in Paris) were excluded from and not part of – or at least to a much lesser degree – these transfer processes.⁸ The description of the political remittances messengers as living in preferential conditions mirrors general research conclusions on political remittances (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2018).

Besides, it should not be forgotten that the circulation of social and political concepts was very much a one-way street, as the influence of German actors on non-German actors was low (with the notable exception of Switzerland, where the secret society 'Young Germany' pioneered the foundation of associations of Swiss journeymen and workers).⁹ In addition, even the very important cross-border solidarity had its limits. As this paper demonstrated, shared interests and aims, in the case of strikes, generated financial support and help on the behalf of German journeymen for their striking comrades abroad. But it has also been argued that foreign journeymen working successfully in their business could stimulate discontent and even riots. Finally, it became apparent that the political impact of political remittances within the German states was limited due to state persecution, limited associational infrastructure and a lack of supporters. Typically, although early and proto-communist groups could be found in numerous German cities, they remained in a minority position. While in the diaspora, a network based on national identity as German existed, inducing feelings of coherence, close ties, common belonging and strength, this binding factor was missing in the home countries. Combined with surveillance and censorship in the different German states, in the years preceding the 1848 revolution, the political remittances already in place could not spread as expected and hoped by the actors living abroad. The extent of the influence of the political remittances of the 1830s and 1840s, if any, on the 1848 revolution in Germany cannot be measured. But, the French revolution of 1848 was undoubtedly a spark for the German revolution which occurred only a few days later in the Grand Duchy of Baden, spreading from there throughout the German states. While in this case, transnational reporting and diffusion of knowledge on the uprising caused immediate effect, the transmission of political remittances in the preceding two decades was a slow infusion process.

Notes

1. This means, too, that this article does not deal with the vast literature on German migration to other European countries and (North) America, in general. In addition, for the decades under consideration here, research is sparse. For example, the well-written article on German organisations in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century by Schrover mentions the pre-1848 years only briefly (Schrover 2006, 853, 859f.).
2. The “knapsack” (in German: “Felleisen”) was a rucksack, mainly made of leather and fur, held together with strings and containing all items the journeyman needed on his travel.
3. See, for example, the very different structures of quarters and residential communities in Copenhagen, where no clear spacial concentration of German migrants existed (Snell 1999, 91) and in London with German migrants in the East End (Panayi 2000, 31f.). See for Danish migrants in the USA Anderson (2019).
4. “Vormärz” is a word characterising the period between the revolutionary uprisings of 1830/31 and the revolution of 1848 which began in Germany in March 1848.
5. With the “Association démocratique” a similar organisation was founded in 1847 in Brussels, see Dunk 1966, 339f.
6. Snell also concludes that in Copenhagen the “Gesellschaft der fremden Maurergesellen” (Society for Foreign Bricklayer Journeymen) in the 1840s focused on mobile artisans (Snell 1999, 19).
7. Deutsche Tribüne, 14 March 1832, quoted in Strähl 1988, 54; Statuten des Bundes der Geäch-teten und Statuten des Bundes der Gerechtigkeit, July 1838, in: Ruckhäberle 1977, 139f., 229; Verein deutscher Handwerker, 1844, in Ruckhäberle 1983, 327.
8. Sources on the political attitudes of these unskilled workers are missing. Similarly to the Russian Jewish Mass migration to London in the late nineteenth century (Hartnett 2019).
9. See the discussion on one-way political remittances in contemporary exchange processes in Piper 2009, 235f.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions to integrate approaches of current migration studies and to consider further places of German emigration and immigrant organisations in the nineteenth century in the article. I would also like to thank the participants of the conference ‘Political Remittances and Political Transnationalism’ at Nuffield College, Oxford, for their additional advice with regard to the research on political remittances. Angèle David-Guillou helped to polish my English.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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